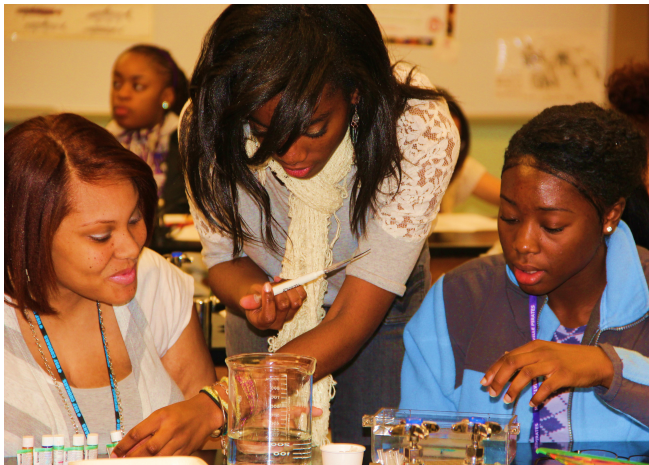


# Freshman Academy & Freshman Mentoring

Merrillville Community School Corporation is Making it Happen!



**WE ARE** The Merrillville Freshman Academy is a part of Merrillville High School, the only diverse high school of its size in Indiana who has been graded an "A" continuously for the last four years. Ten years ago a preponderance of Merrillville HS freshmen ended their first year of high school with only half the credits they needed, prompting the establishment of the Freshman Academy, the first in Northwest Indiana. The Academy focuses students on core subjects and provides extended class time and smaller class sizes in the critical content areas of English, Math and Science..

**OUR STUDENTS & FAMILIES** Building strong relationships with students has paid dividends for us. MHS continued to boast an overall graduation rate of at least 89% while the state graduation rate was 85.7%. Students are selected for the Academy program based on their academic history or trends. This means that students with a wide range of academic abilities can be selected for a program that emphasizes building positive relationships with peers and adults while maximizing student achievement.

**OUR TEACHERS** We rely on a team of teachers and support staff to seek out best practices, train, and lead professional development. Teachers work in teams to develop strategies and interventions for individual students who are struggling and develop positive home-school relations. Teachers work collaboratively to meet the needs of students struggling with an array of academic, social, or other personal obstacles.

For more information about our school or corporation, email: Mike Krutz, Principal, [mkrutz@mvsc.k12.in.us](mailto:mkrutz@mvsc.k12.in.us), or visit our website: <http://merrillville.schoolwires.net/mhs>

**OUR PROMISING PRACTICE** The Freshman Academy program is meant to create positive and meaningful connections with freshmen along with promoting an energetic and socially responsible student body. Science, Math, English and a variety of Tech courses are the backbone of STEM at MHS and are interwoven components of the Freshman Curriculum. We are committed to improving student performance in areas of problem solving and critical thinking, ensuring students are ready for college and career fields. Outside the math and science classes, opportunities exist to compete and explore through a number of extra-curricular programs and clubs such as JETS, Science Olympiad, Project Lead the Way, Environmental Club and more.

**OUR STEPS** The freshman mentoring program is key to the success of the Academy. It began as a comprehensive transition, orientation and mentoring program welcoming new students to high school. The program trains upperclassmen to become effective mentors to facilitate interactive orientation days and seminars throughout the school year with direct contact with the freshmen and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The seminars address issues such as respect, miscommunication, conflict management, bullying and social media. The mentors are expected to be a positive role model for the entire student body. The Freshman Mentors are comprised of juniors and seniors who best represent our student demographics. They are role models to freshmen and meet with them to discuss the transition to high school and the importance of respect, education, and personal identity. They discuss their own experiences as they try to relate the importance of Merrillville pride and the advantages students have here. The mentors are called upon throughout the school year to aid in school functions.

**OUR SOURCES** *This basic Rigor/Relevance/Relationships framework is interwoven in all our instruction and assessment. Teachers make it their own by adding strategies for differentiating instruction, developing higher learning goals, and improving student achievement.*